

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, NURSES'  
QUARTERS 1

(Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Building No. 3)

(Veterans Administration Hospital, Jefferson Barracks)

(Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks  
Division)

VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division

1 Jefferson Barracks Drive

Saint Louis

Independent City

Missouri

HABS MO-1943-C

*MO-1943-C*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

1849 C Street NW

Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, NURSES' QUARTERS 1

HABS No. MO-1943-C

**Location:** Building 3, VA Medical Center, 1 Jefferson Barracks Drive,  
St. Louis, Missouri  
USGS Quadrangle Oakville, Missouri  
UTM Coordinates 16 7258820 E 9965931 N

**Date of Construction:** 1922-1923

**Designer** Treasury Department Supervising Architect's Office

**Contractor** James Stewart and Company

**Present Owner:** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

**Present Use:** Vacant/Under Renovation

**Significance:** The Nurses' Quarters was part of the early 1920s effort to build modern hospitals for U.S. military veterans and was part of the original U.S. Veterans Bureau Hospital built at Jefferson Barracks from 1922 to 1923. The Nurses' Quarters continued to serve as nurses' accommodations at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, from the 1920s through about 1940, and then served as quarters for nurses and hospital attendants through the 1970s. The building is now vacant and undergoing interior remodeling.

**Project Information:** This project was sponsored and funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as mitigation for the demolition of buildings at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, a property that has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places via consensus determination of eligibility between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources State Historic Preservation Office.

**Description:**

The Nurses' Quarters 1 (Building 3) is a two-story stucco-clad facility with a hipped roof and metal replacement windows. The building is seventeen bays wide and three bays deep. The structure of the building is composed of a reinforced-concrete frame consisting of concrete posts and floors. Wall spaces in between the reinforced-concrete posts are filled in with brick and terra-cotta block. None of the building's structure is visible on the exterior since the entire exterior is surfaced in stucco that dates to the last twenty years. The hipped main roof of the building was originally clad in slate shingles but now features asphalt shingles.

The interior of Nurses' Quarters 1 has been repeatedly remodeled and retains no original features or elements of the original floor plan. A contractor was undertaking interior remodeling of the building at the time of fieldwork for this project. The building faces a large asphalt parking lot and sits across the parking lot from the former Administration Building (Building 2).

The facade of Nurses' Quarters 1 faces east, and features stucco cladding and aluminum replacement double-hung windows. The facade also features a two-story shed-roof addition near the center, a shed-roof entrance vestibule that is also an addition to the building, and twin two-story gabled bays, also additions. A plain white cornice runs along the roofline across the entire facade.

The north and south walls both have gabled bays that are additions to the building, and the north wall has an arched recess below the gable. Like the rest of the building, the north and south walls feature a series of double-hung metal replacement windows. Both the north and south walls have a plain white raking cornice. The rear (west) wall has stucco cladding, double-hung replacement windows, and two gabled two-story bays that were added at the locations of fire escapes that appear on a 1940 floor plan of the building. A plain white cornice runs the entire length of the west wall.

**History:**

The U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, was part of an early 1920s plan to reform health care for veterans. Before the early 1920s, health care for veterans had in many cases been dispensed from improvised facilities that were in poor condition and not well suited for the task. After a well-publicized tour of some of these hospitals, the U.S. Veterans Bureau began planning and construction on new, modern hospitals throughout the United States. Planning for the U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, including drafting of construction drawings for Nurses' Quarters 1 (Building 3), took place in 1922. Construction on the hospital complex began in 1922, and the buildings were completed in 1923.

The design of Nurses' Quarters 1 is modest but reflects Neoclassical Revival influence. The early twentieth century had seen a revival of Italian Renaissance and English Palladian architectural design, as well as other forms of European Classical design. In addition, the era of the 1920s was the beginning of a period in which interest in American Colonial architectural forms also reached a climax. Both architectural movements spawned an interest in symmetrical form and Classically inspired ornament. Features such as Classical columns and pediments were used heavily, and the ornamentation on buildings was in many cases restrained compared to the more lavish ornamentation on late nineteenth-century buildings.

As it existed originally, Nurses' Quarters 1 would have had a fairly simple Neoclassical Revival exterior. The building had a hipped roof and a symmetrical façade centered on a wood hipped-roof porch.<sup>1</sup> Elevation drawings of Nurses' Quarters 1 have not survived, but floor plans show that the central front porch had pairs of square wood posts, so its design was probably very similar to the original center porch of the south wall of the Attendants' Quarters (Building 4).

Plans for most of the 1920s Veterans Bureau hospital buildings were standardized, but the architectural style was varied according to the location of the hospital. Styles like Spanish Revival might be used at hospitals in the southwestern United States, while Neoclassical and Colonial Revival decoration was more commonly used in the Southeast, Mid-Atlantic, New England, and the Midwest.<sup>2</sup> Drawings for the U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, including the Nurses' Quarters drawings, bear the title block of the Veterans Bureau, and thus were designed in-house by federal government architects rather than by a private architectural firm.

James A. Wetmore is recorded on the cornerstone of the Main Hospital as the Acting Supervising Architect. Wetmore was head of the Office of the Supervising Architect from 1915 to 1933. This office was a wing of the Treasury Department and was often in charge of designing federal facilities such as courthouses and post offices. Wetmore was primarily a lawyer and government administrator and should not be credited with the actual design of the Main Hospital building—staff architects of the Office of the Supervising Architect would have designed the Nurses' Quarters and other buildings at the U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks.<sup>3</sup> In the case of the Jefferson Barracks Veterans Bureau

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<sup>1</sup> Department of the Treasury, Supervising Architect's Office, *U.S. Veterans Bureau, Jefferson Barracks, Nurses' Quarters*, 1922, on file at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

<sup>2</sup> Gjore J. Mollenhoff, Karen R. Tupek, and Sandra Webb, "Veterans Administration Medical Center, Hartford, Vermont," in *Connecticut River Joint Commissions: National Register Properties*, <http://www.crjc.org/heritage/V11-21.htm> (accessed July 29, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Antoinette J. Lee, *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 220, 215, 222-223.

project, Warren G. Noll, foreman drafter with the Office of the Supervising Architect, appears to have been in charge of the project, and signed the construction drawings for many of the buildings.

During Wetmore's tenure as head of the supervising architect's office, he worked closely with William McAdoo, the Secretary of the Treasury, to develop standard plans for federal buildings. Building 1 is a product of this standardization movement. Highly visible buildings that accommodated high-revenue facilities in large cities were given a greater level of architectural detail, while buildings on less prominent sites in small communities were more plain. Since the hospital was in a remote site, the buildings have a more basic design than that of a main federal building, like a post office, in a large city. Although the design for Building 1 was standardized, individual plan sets were developed for the building. The supervising architect's office recognized that each building site was unique and developed individual plan sets based on the standard designs for every building they were responsible for. The use of standardized plans cut down on costs and sped up construction time.<sup>4</sup>

Drawings for the Nurses' Quarters were drafted in 1922, but the exact month is difficult to read from the copies of the one floor-plan sheet that has survived from that time. The plans for the building show communal rooms in the central block of the building on the first and second floors, and apartments and bath and toilet facilities in the north and south wings. The center block of the first floor contained a community room, reading room, and reception room, while the first floors of the two wings had a total of fourteen small bedrooms. Each bedroom was 9'5" x 11'0", and each had one closet and a single door opening out into a corridor. Bath facilities consisted of one room for bathing and one toilet room in each wing. The south wing also contained an office.<sup>5</sup>

The second floor of the north and south wings contained fourteen of the small apartments (similar to the ones on the first floor), two larger one-room apartments, and two sets of rooms that appear to be two-room apartments with private baths. The two-room apartments were labeled as being occupied by supervisors. The building's basement contained storage facilities, a dining room, serving room, small kitchenette, and recreation room.<sup>6</sup>

Nurses' Quarters 1 continued in its original function through the 1920s and most of the 1930s. When Nurses' Quarters 2 (Building 18) was constructed in 1937, the functions of other buildings on the hospital campus changed. Floor plans of Nurses' Quarters 1 from 1940 have the building labeled as "Attendants' Quarters," although a label on the first-floor plan seems to indicate that nurses were still accommodated on this floor. The floor

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 220, 215, 222-223.

<sup>5</sup> Department of the Treasury, *Nurses' Quarters*.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

plan of the building does not appear to have been extensively altered, but the plans do show a two-story addition on the south side of the building that would have provided eight more one-room apartments.<sup>7</sup>

A 1950 master plan map of the Jefferson Barracks VA facility showed Building 3 as Attendants' Quarters.<sup>8</sup> During the 1970s or 1980s, the front porch was removed and a two-story shed-roofed stucco-clad addition was built. Windows were replaced throughout the building, likely in 1981-1982, during a major window replacement campaign at the medical center.<sup>9</sup> By 1990, the building had been converted to use as a research and educational facility.<sup>10</sup> Today, the building is vacant and is in the process of being gutted and remodeled on the interior for reuse. The interior does not retain any original finishes or aspects of the original floor plan.

#### **Sources:**

Department of the Treasury, Supervising Architect's Office. *U.S. Veterans Bureau, Jefferson Barracks, Nurses' Quarters*. 1922. On file at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

Jamieson and Spearl, Architects and Engineers, *544-Bed Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Master Plan*. 1950. On file at St. Louis VA Hospital, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

Lee, Antoinette J. *Architects of the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office*. Oxford University Press: New York, 2000.

Mollenhoff, Gjore J., Karen R. Tupek, and Sandra Webb. "Veterans Administration Medical Center, Hartford, Vermont" in *Connecticut River Joint Commissions: National Register Properties*. <http://www.crjc.org/heritage/V11-21.htm> (accessed May 7, 2010).

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Veterans Administration, *Attendants' Quarters, Building No. 3, Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.*, 1940, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

<sup>8</sup> Jamieson and Spearl, Architects and Engineers, *544-Bed Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Master Plan*, 1950, on file at St. Louis VA Hospital, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Construction drawing files for Building 3, 1922-2010, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, *Annual Real Property Survey Report, Building Numbers and Locations, Jefferson Barracks VAMC*, 1990, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

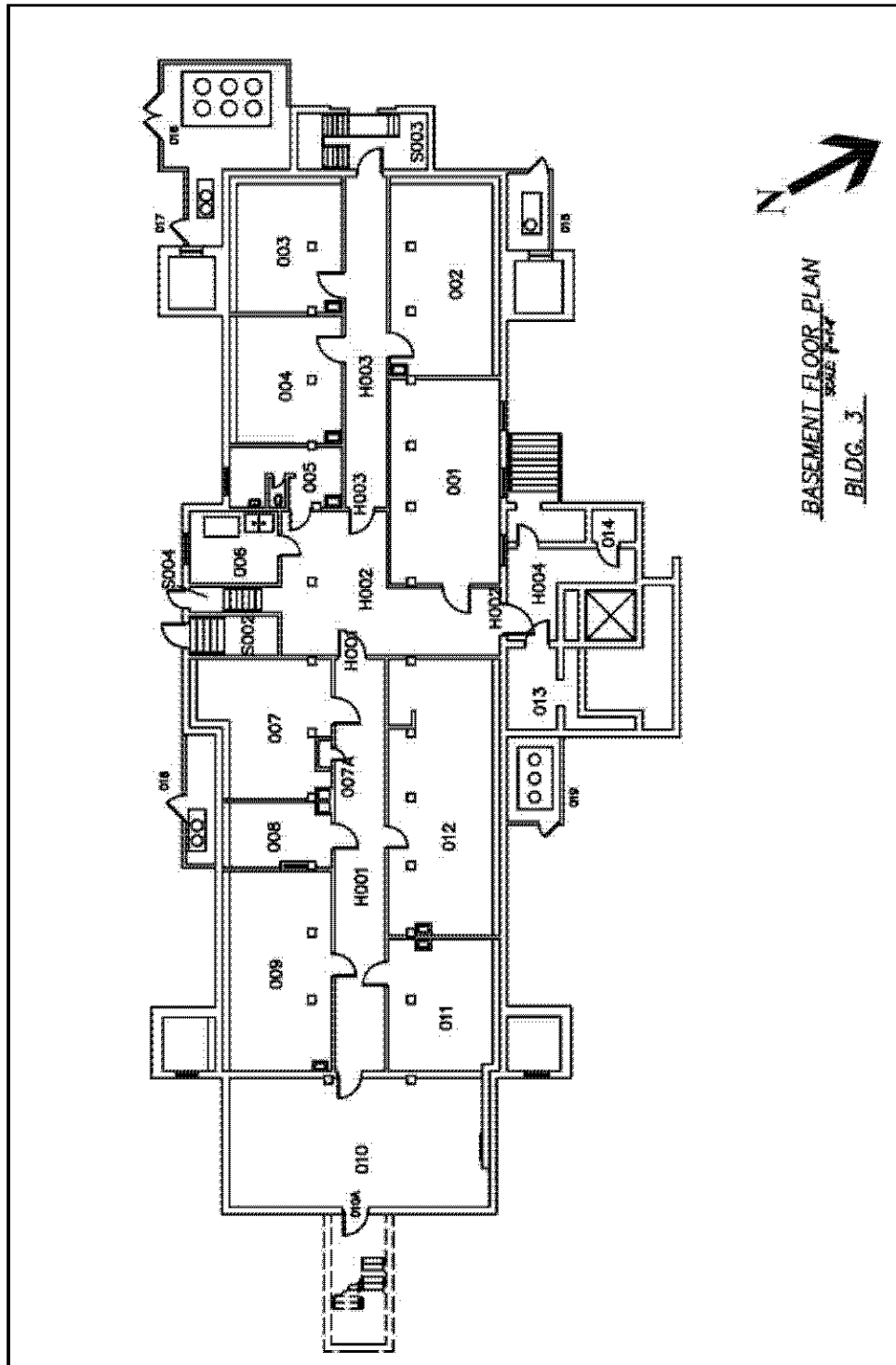
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. *Annual Real Property Survey Report, Building Numbers and Locations, Jefferson Barracks VAMC*. 1990. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

———. Construction drawing files for Building 3, St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division. 1950-2010. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

U.S. Veterans Administration. *Attendants' Quarters, Building No. 3, Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.* 1940. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

**Historians:**

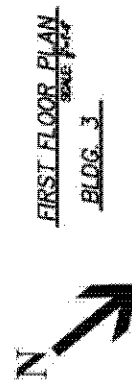
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Nurses' Quarters 1 (Building 3), current basement floor plan

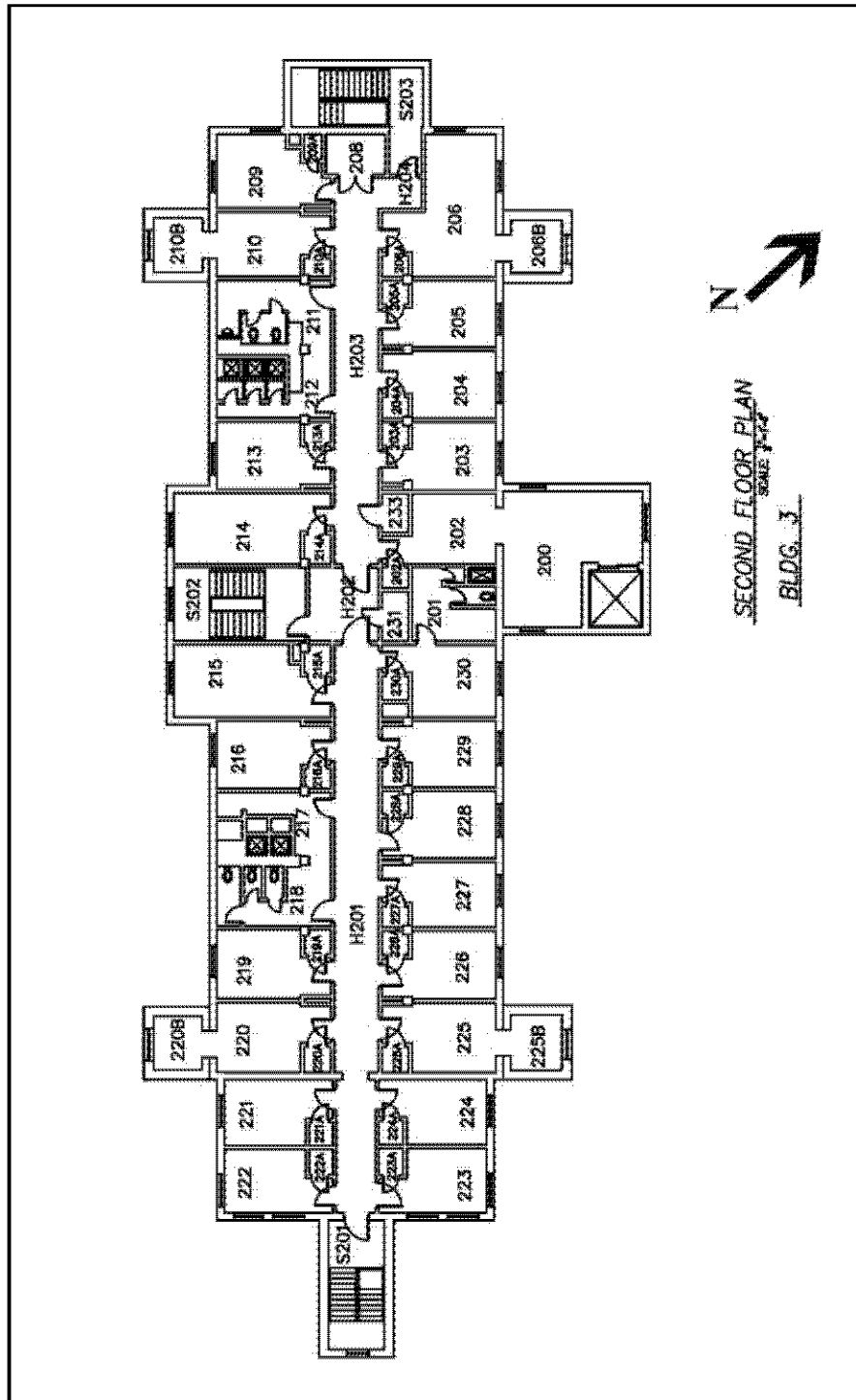


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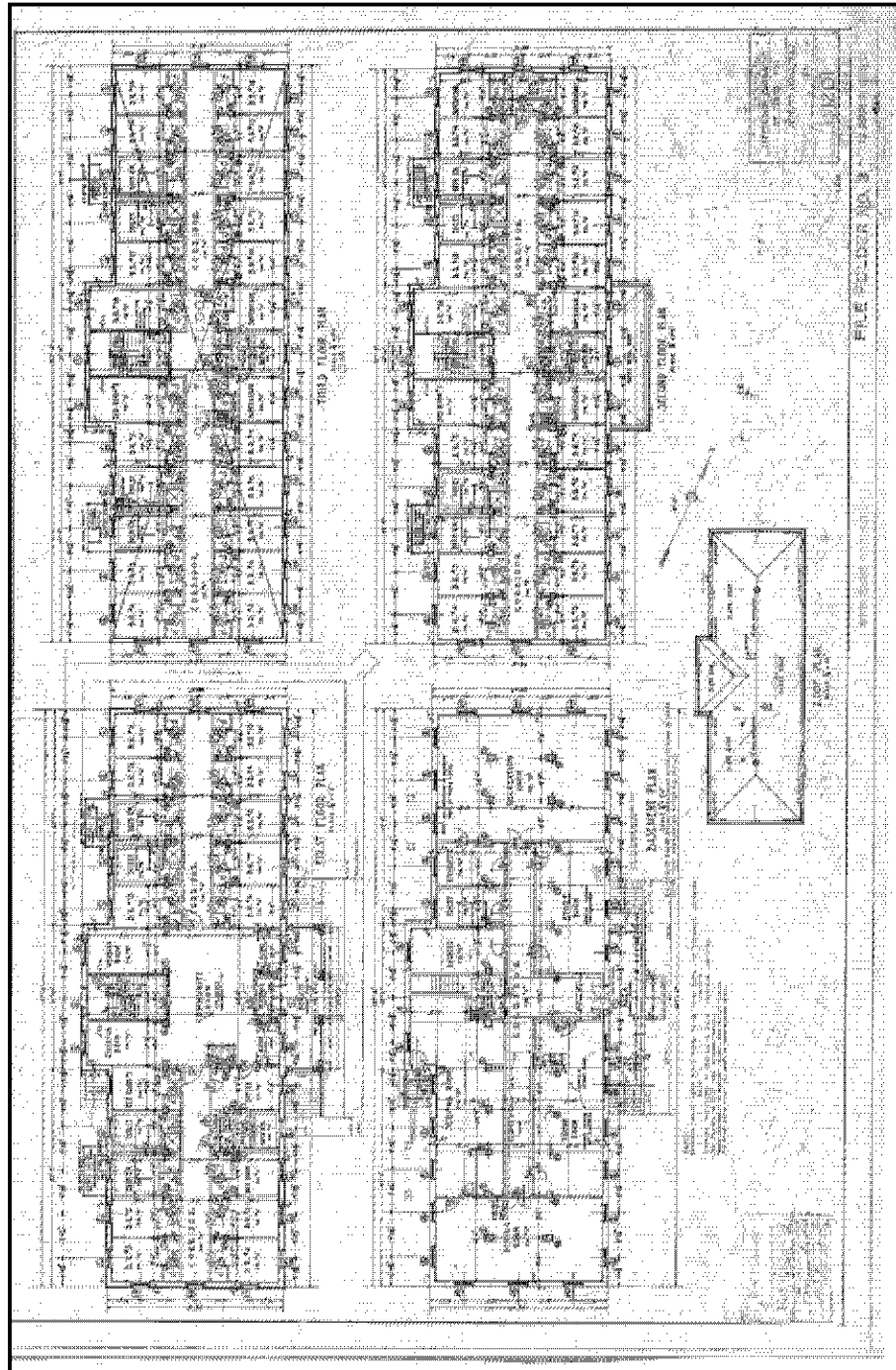
Nurses' Quarters 1 (Building 3), current floor plan of first floor

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Nurses' Quarters 1 (Building 3), current floor plan of second floor

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Original floor plans for the Nurses' Quarters 1 (Building 3), 1922